

September 9, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Hagel:

I am writing to you today to express my disappointment with the decision by the Department of Defense to discontinue plans to construct a commissary on Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Georgia.

The construction of a commissary at Dobbins Air Reserve Base comes at a critical time for the Metro Atlanta military community. As you may be aware, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations approved by Congress in 2005 ordered the closure of Forts Gillem and McPherson as well as the Naval Supply School in Athens, Georgia by 2011. These BRAC closures have resulted in the shuttering of commissaries that the Atlanta military community has relied upon for years.

Understanding this, the Defense Commissary Agency has continued to operate the Fort McPherson commissary in the wake of the closure of Fort Gillem and the Naval Supply School in 2011. While the Military Services have worked to determine the future of the Atlanta-area's commissary access and force structure, the Fort McPherson commissary is slated for closure on September 28, 2013—leaving Atlanta-based servicemembers and veterans without convenient access to this benefit they so valiantly earned.

Atlanta is home to thousands of active duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel as well as thousands of military retirees. Fort Benning, which is two hours southwest of Atlanta, is the closest commissary that would serve this population should the Dobbins ARB commissary not be constructed. Furthermore, Camp Merrill, located in Northeast Georgia, maintains a small commissary that was previously supported by Fort Gillem. A commissary at Dobbins ARB would be a sensible replacement to support Camp Merrill and uphold the commitment made to military personnel and retirees in the Metro Atlanta area.

Given the August 2009 approval of the Dobbins ARB commissary project by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, it would seem that your recent directive to discontinue this project is in direct contradiction of Department of Defense policy. I believe that Dobbins ARB is long overdue for such a critical component of any military community. While I am keenly aware of the budgetary difficulties facing the Department of Defense as a result of sequestration, I urge you to reconsider your decision to deprive the Metro Atlanta military community of a convenient and accessible commissary that our area's veterans so deserve.

Sincerely,

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Phil Gingrey, M.D  
Member of Congress